

Washington, D.C. - On the morning before President Bush delivers his State of the Union Address to Congress, U.S. Reps. David Price (NC-04) and Brad Miller (NC-13), introduced a bill to phase out the U.S. military involvement in Iraq by year's end.

The Price-Miller legislation would terminate the President's authority to wage war in Iraq on December 31, 2007, and would require an exit strategy to bring American troops home by that date. The bill would also enhance political and diplomatic efforts designed to hasten the total transfer of authority to the Iraqi government and bolster that government's chances of success after the American presence has ended.

"In his recent speech on Iraq, the President recklessly rejected the advice of his generals in Iraq and in the Pentagon, along with the will of Congress and the majority of Americans," Price said. "With this bill, we are calling for a responsible end to the occupation of Iraq by a date certain. If the President refuses to change his misguided course in Iraq, we in Congress have an obligation to force his hand."

"The President thinks Congress is sticking its nose into his war," said Miller. "Our generals have repeatedly said any solution to the crisis in Iraq will be political and diplomatic, not military."

Asserting that the U.S. military cannot solve Iraq's internal problems, the North Carolina congressmen recognize that America's national security has an important stake in Iraq's future. Thus, they are seeking to expand dramatically political and diplomatic efforts in the region to provide Iraq the best chance to govern and defend itself as U.S. forces exit. Their bill calls for a regional diplomacy initiative modeled after the recommendations of the bipartisan Iraq Study Group, including the establishment of an Office of Special Presidential Envoy for Iraq Regional Security. The envoy would convene a regional conference and develop an Iraq Support Group consisting of Iraq's neighbors and other international stakeholders who are willing to pledge assistance and cooperation in an effort to stabilize Iraq and the region.

The bill would also authorize funding for a major jobs program for Iraqis, in order to turn would-be insurgents and militia-men into law-abiding citizens contributing to the welfare of Iraq. However, such funding would only be available when Iraqis reach a political agreement for the equitable sharing of power and resources, serving as an incentive for the Iraqi government to take significant steps toward national reconciliation. The legislation also pledges continued U.S.

support for developing democratic institutions in Iraq, particularly local and provincial governments.

#